

Impact 100 Metro Detroit Grant Summary
Grant Finalist: Dutton Farm, Inc.
Project: Community Garden and Greenhouse

Background: Dutton Farm was founded by a mother and daughter team that has been providing skill building and job training services to over 2500 young persons with disabilities since 2010. Out of love for Michele's daughter, and Jenny's sister, Rebecca, who has Down Syndrome and was left with little to no opportunity, the two developed a groundbreaking and innovative business model that has created opportunities for young people of all abilities to contribute. This model was designed after the leader at Dutton Farm saw an unemployment rate of over 80% and a lack of equal opportunities and inclusion in the workforce for people with disabilities. Within 3 years of Dutton Farm opening, its job training and employment programs have served 1,000 individuals with disabilities in Metro Detroit. Within 5 years Dutton Farm developed a social enterprise that has grown over 200% each year giving Dutton Farm the ability to hire people within the organization guaranteeing success of its participants in finding meaningful work. Dutton Farm made the business decision to make inclusion and workforce development their organization's primary focus. Currently there is not a system or practice in place that guarantees young adults with disabilities workforce development and training. The priority of the organization is to achieve over 50% inclusive employment placements with proper job coaching to ensure success.

Unmet Need: Currently, all community gardens in the greater Rochester area are at capacity, and none of the current community gardens are accessible. The number of people this would benefit would be all 150 Dutton Farm participants, over 400 community members who would have access to fresh, local produce, along with hundreds of community members that would walk through our grounds and enjoy the beauty of our property. There are not currently any inclusive community gardens that foster an inclusive environment while providing access to plants and local produce. An individual in a wheelchair is almost always left on the sidelines of life as an adult, and this project will create equality and foster positive engagement and genuine inclusion as individuals work alongside each other.

Project Summary: Our goal is to build accessible community garden space where people with and without disabilities can work side by side doing in a dignified and inclusive setting. Through this program we will also educate on prevention of waste through utilizing our land for growing our own produce from seed to table and educating adults with disabilities on the benefits of consuming local produce, the importance of using all produce that is grown to prevent waste and how to use produce in a variety of ways. We also educate our program participants on different ways to use the produce. For example, we make and freeze zucchini bread, we make applesauce, can tomatoes and salsa. We also are intentional about diversity, equity and inclusion and intentionally bring the greater community in by selling produce to individuals who do not have the space for their own gardens, so that they can still have access to fresh, local produce.

Top reported recreational activities in Michigan are relaxing outdoors, walking outdoors, picnicking, and visiting gardens or nature centers. We will build accessible and well-lit walkways for access to leisurely walks, apple picking, gardening and other outdoor activities to support local community residents of all abilities to utilize our seven acres of land.

Outcome: We will evaluate this project through surveys to ensure satisfaction and accessibility. We will measure the number of neuro diverse and neurotypical individuals served each year. We will measure the amount of local produce distributed and sold. We will also evaluate the project based on the timeline, goals and objectives outlined by baking each goal, objective and deadline into our community strategic plan that is evaluated quarterly by our board of directors. Lastly, we will measure the number of jobs established from the transferable job skills that are developed through this program.

Sustainability: Dutton Farm will support the growth in this program as we build capacity by unlocking Medicaid dollars that will provide long term support for all persons served who need support. We will have the opportunity to grow and serve more individuals in need who are currently on our waiting list thereby increasing our revenue through Medicaid. We will also sell plants, seedlings, flower bouquets and local produce to the community that will bring in revenue for sustainability.



